



The Pet Column

By Abbas Hussain of Principal Pets

Pack Leadership

The whole concept of 'pack leadership' in domestic dogs, as it is commonly understood, has long been dismissed by trainers, veterinarians, veterinary behaviourists and modern behavioural science.

Do we need to provide leadership and guidance for our dogs? Of course.

Do we need to force them to be 'submissive' to us and view us as a 'dominant' figure? No.

The History of Pack Theory

The concept of 'Pack Theory' came from a study of unrelated wolves in captivity where the 'alphas' (dominant wolves) had primary access to food and resources, maintaining their dominance through displays of aggression towards the other wolves.

This research was then applied to domesticated dogs as they were believed to be descended from wolves and has been used to explain social interactions and how dogs should be trained.

What is a True 'Pack'?

However, this study has since been deemed as flawed by the very scientists who conducted it. More recent studies show that wolves in the wild operate in a family pack where the parents train the cubs through leadership roles and the cubs follow and offer deference willingly, rather than this being forced onto them by their parents.

The original study's results were skewed by the wolves being forced to live together in captivity in unrelated packs, unable to behave as they would do in a natural familial pack.

The researchers incorrectly concluded that the wolves were driven by a desire to seek status over one another, mistakenly using human interpretations of their behaviour. It is more likely that the issue of rank, for these wolves, was driven by the need for survival, safety and reproduction. The higher the rank, the safer it was for wolves to gain and hold on to their resources. So some wolves learned to survive by challenging others and other wolves learned to survive by showing deference.

Dog trainers used this study of wolf behaviour to understand 'dog behaviour'. Unfortunately, the truth regarding these results and the concepts of dominance and submission have only recently been accurately understood. Also, dogs are separated from wolves by over 15,000 years of domestication. Their social interactions and emotional developments put them as far from wolves as humans are from chimpanzees.

In conclusion

Should we be leaders and help guide our dogs to make the right choices as much as possible? Absolutely!

Is it even possible for us to pretend that we are 'pack leaders'? No. We are not dogs and, therefore, cannot be part of a dog pack, captive or otherwise, and we should no longer treat dogs with violence like the captive wolves did to each other in those long ago – and now known to be flawed – studies. If we want to be true leaders, we must lead non-violently without domination or intimidation, regardless of dog breed, drive or behavioural issue.



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Thanks to all the people who got in touch after Mark Kinnish's request for information on the building opposite Irby Motors on Mill Hill Road in Irby.

Mark told *Heswall Magazine*: "I would like to thank everybody who contacted me with information. A special thank you to Sybil Haworth who invited me to her house to show me this painting of her old shop by Barbara Butcher and allowing me show it in *Heswall Magazine*. The building is still there today but is now a privately owned bungalow. Sybil has told me it was a great shop and very popular with locals and there is a bit about her shop in the book *Old Irby* written by Derek Young. Apparently he also mentions a gentleman called John Yowd who owned a lot of land around Irby at that time. If anyone has any further information on John Yowd please get in touch with me through *Heswall Magazine*."

Downhill Biking Champion

Rosy Monaghan from Heswall became UK National Junior Downhill Biking Champion once again, winning at Glencoe in Scotland.

Rosy has also received an invite from Cycling GB team to participate in UCI World Champs September 2018 hosted at Lenzerheide Bike Park, Switzerland, and the final round of the UCI World Cup in La Bresse, France, where she will be the youngest entrant.

